

e l i z a b e t h m a c k a y b a l d e r s t o n

641 Alvarado Road Berkeley, CA 94705

510/652-6351 paxrat1@sbcglobal.net

October 31, 2007

MLPA INITIATIVE BOARD AND STAFF
C/O CALIFORNIA RESOURCES AGENCY
1416 NINTH STREET #1311
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814

Dear Friends,

You are presently holding hearings to help decide the most effective ways to preserve our precious California coastline. I applaud your determination to take your time, listen to many voices and to make reasoned decisions.

I would like to make two points in this letter that perhaps may not yet have been voiced or considered. They come from a person who spent every summer for twenty five years on the coast, and lived and worked in the coast community for two years. I was lucky to get a job teaching special education at the Pt. Arena High School and came to admire the talent and local knowledge of many of the students there.

My father in law, Walter H. Ratcliff and his wife Muriel bought their property in 1926. He was a friend and admirer of John Muir and they taught Muir's ideals of reverence and protection of nature to their children and grandchildren, and so on through four generations. We were lucky and we knew it and we felt a responsibility to share the beach and the tide pools with friends and students who we knew would respect the land as we did.

So that is my first point: The Ranch is presently guarded by people who know every inch, whose beaches contain a natural balance of sea urchins, starfish, abalone, capizone, etc. I have seen octopus there, laughed at the California Harbor Seal competing for top positions on the rocks and thrilled to see great Orcus whales surfacing on their way north.

The second point is about one decision that I have heard you may be considering—to make the great stretches of private property into “red zones” where no one, not even the land owners themselves, may go. Can this be true?

National, state and city governments are woefully short on money for most programs these days. The numbers of professional wardens and rangers who monitor the coast is dropping because of lack of funds and deep salary cuts. To close off the private stewards from their ocean boundaries seems foolish from the consideration of proper land

management and economics. Why not allow the private stewards who have preserved their land for generations to continue doing so? There will never be enough public officers to patrol and protect the coast. There aren't now.

I urge you to give ear to the owners of the land. They have lessons to teach.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth Balderston". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Elizabeth Balderston

Cc: Governor Arnold Schwarznegger, The Coast Observer, newspaper for the Mendocino/Sonoma Coast.

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